

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

December 9, 2010

President Obama, Poland's Komorowski Reaffirm U.S.-Polish Alliance.....	1
Steinberg Leads U.S. Delegation to China for North Korea Talks	1
U.S. Urges Calm as Haitian Election Results Are Reviewed.....	2
U.S., ECOWAS Call for Côte d'Ivoire Election to Be Respected.....	3

President Obama, Poland's Komorowski Reaffirm U.S.-Polish Alliance

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama and Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski reaffirmed their commitment to the U.S.-Polish alliance by expanding defense cooperation, supporting greater economic links and promoting democracy in Europe and globally, the White House said December 8.

Obama and Komorowski met for about one hour in the Oval Office before meeting with reporters and calling for U.S. and Russian ratification of the New START arms reduction treaty. Action on the treaty has been delayed while some members of the U.S. Senate receive assurances that the United States will continue to modernize its nuclear arsenal.

Russia and the United States have signed the treaty, which is designed to reduce nuclear arsenals to 1,550 nuclear warheads for each country, down about a third from the current ceiling of 2,200 warheads. Both the U.S. Senate and Russian Duma have to ratify the treaty before it can take effect.

"Poland supports and fully accepts the aspiration for the ratification of the New START because we believe that this is the investment in the better and safer future," Komorowski said through an interpreter.

Obama also confirmed a commitment by the United States to implement a missile defense system for Europe, known as Phased Adaptive Approach, which includes locating land-based SM-3 missile interceptors in Poland by approximately 2018. The president praised Poland for agreeing to host a portion of the missile defense system and for hosting an Air Force detachment that will help with training and defense. U.S. military aircraft will periodically rotate into Poland.

"We also discussed the tremendous sacrifices that the Polish military are making as part of the alliance in Afghanistan," Obama said.

In Afghanistan, the United States will place 800 U.S. troops under Polish tactical command in Ghazni province and will loan an additional 20 U.S. mine-resistant armored vehicles to the Polish army, the White House said.

The United States and Poland have also agreed to enhance cooperation on scientific, technical and policy aspects of clean and efficient energy technologies.

"Because our relationship is not restricted to security, we discussed a range of economic issues, as well, including Polish leadership on energy independence issues in Central and Eastern Europe," Obama said.

Obama cited Poland as a model for other nations in Central and Eastern Europe that are trying to build democratic institutions. And Obama and Komorowski confirmed their support for the European Union's Eastern Partnership Initiative, which is designed to strengthen ties between the EU and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Steinberg Leads U.S. Delegation to China for North Korea Talks

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.
Staff Writer

Washington — Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, the second-highest-ranking U.S. diplomat, is leading a high-level team of officials to Beijing for talks with senior Chinese officials about Northeast Asian security and recent hostile acts by North Korea, the State Department announced December 7.

Steinberg said at a Washington policy research group event that "China has a critical role to play" in reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula after what Washington has described as hostile behavior by the North Korean regime in recent weeks. China and the United States are working together to find solutions to some of the more "vexing problems" that confront the Northeast Asian region, Steinberg said of the upcoming security talks.

"It is critically important that China continue to play a strong role making clear to North Korea that there are consequences for its actions," Steinberg said at the Center for American Progress December 7. "We welcome the rise of a successful, strong and prosperous China that plays a greater role in global affairs," he added.

China is the North Korean regime's closest ally and its largest trading partner.

North Korean army units fired more than 200 artillery shells November 23 on a South Korean fishing community on Yeonpyeong Island, which lies approximately 11.25 kilometers (seven miles) off the coast of North Korea. South Korean army units fired back with about 80 artillery shells. Four South Koreans were killed in the artillery barrage — two marines and two civilians.

The Beijing meetings, set for December 14-17, follow closely a meeting in Washington December 6 by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton with South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan and Japanese Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara. They said in a joint declaration

that recent North Korean actions have jeopardized peace in Asia and that Pyongyang's provocative and belligerent behavior will be met with solidarity from all three countries.

In remarks after the trilateral meeting, Clinton said North Korea's November 23 attack upon the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong violated the 1953 armistice that halted armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula, and its announcement that it has centrifuges capable of enriching uranium violates several U.N. Security Council resolutions. North Korea recently showed a visiting American nuclear expert a new small industrial-scale uranium processing facility for producing low-enriched uranium for a new reactor.

Robert Carlin of Stanford University, also a North Korea expert, told reporters that he toured the nuclear site and said it was beyond what most experts had imagined.

The Six-Party Talks, involving North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the United States, "cannot substitute for action by North Korea to comply with its obligations," Clinton said. The talks, which are chaired by China, aim to convince North Korea to forgo a nuclear weapons development program and to eliminate nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula.

Clinton expressed appreciation for China's initiative to propose an emergency session of discussions, but said that an appropriate basis must exist first for their resumption. "Any effort, of course, must start with North Korea ceasing all provocative and belligerent behavior," she added.

President Obama telephoned Chinese President Hu Jintao on December 5 to discuss North Korea, the White House said.

"The two presidents discussed our common interest in peace and stability in Northeast Asia and the priority of ensuring the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the White House said in a prepared statement. "They agreed on the importance of the United States and China working together toward these shared goals. The president emphasized the need for North Korea to halt its provocative behavior and to meet its international obligations, including its commitments in the 2005 Six-Party Joint Declaration."

Obama has condemned the North Korean shelling of Yeonpyeong Island and its pursuit of a uranium enrichment program in defiance of its obligations. He encouraged China to work with the United States and others to send a message to the North Korean regime of Kim Jong Il that its provocations are unacceptable, the White House said.

National Security Advisor Tom Donilon met with Foreign Minister Maehara and Foreign Minister Kim, also on December 6. Donilon expressed the president's support and personal interest in this trilateral process, and emphasized its timeliness in the wake of the two recent North Korean provocations, the White House said.

Joining Steinberg's delegation are Jeffrey Bader, National Security Council senior director for Asian affairs; Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs; and Special Envoy for the Six-Party Talks Sung Kim.

"In Beijing, they will meet senior officials to continue consultations with the Chinese on regional security issues, including recent developments on the Korean Peninsula," the State Department said in an announcement. Campbell will travel to Tokyo on December 16 for consultations, and Kim travels to Seoul on December 16, the announcement said.

U.S. Urges Calm as Haitian Election Results Are Reviewed

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration is calling for calm in Haiti as irregularities and complaints stemming from the country's November 28 presidential election are reviewed, and says the United States is determined to help Haiti achieve credible election results.

State Department spokesman Philip J. Crowley said December 8 that the United States and others in the international community "stand ready to support efforts to thoroughly review irregularities so that the final electoral results are consistent with the will of the Haitian people."

Demonstrations broke out December 7 after Haiti's provisional election council announced the preliminary results of the November 28 contest.

The council said that former Haitian first lady Mirlande Manigat won 31 percent of the vote and Jude Célestin, a member of Haiti's ruling party, won 22 percent. The council's results gave popular music star Michel Martelly a close third-place finish at 21 percent, or 6,800 votes behind Célestin. A third-place finish would eliminate Martelly from participating in the January 16, 2011, runoff election.

Crowley said U.S. officials are concerned by the provisional election council's preliminary results, saying they are "inconsistent with the published results of the National Election Observation Council, or CNO, which had more than 5,500 observers and observed the count in

1,600 voting centers nationwide.”

He urged “all political actors and their supporters to remain calm and to work peacefully” as Haiti reviews the electoral process and investigates complaints of irregularities.

Crowley said the United States is determined to help Haiti achieve a credible and legitimate election result that reflects the will of the Haitian people.

In a December 8 statement on the website of the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, the United States also urged Haitian political leaders and their supporters to engage in peaceful expression and to work through their country’s process for contesting elections to address concerns.

“The 2010 elections represent a critical test of whether the Haitian people will determine their destiny through their vote, and it would be regrettable that violence would mar this process,” the embassy statement said.

U.S., ECOWAS Call for Côte d’Ivoire Election to Be Respected

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration welcomes a communiqué from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) backing the December 2 declaration by Côte d’Ivoire’s Independent Electoral Commission that Alassane Ouattara is the country’s legitimately elected president and calls on incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo to step aside.

The ECOWAS communiqué “was a very strong, very clear determination that Alassane Ouattara is the duly elected president of Côte d’Ivoire,” and is “very consistent with the American position,” U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan Rice said December 7.

“As ECOWAS said, it is also ... incumbent on President Gbagbo to peacefully and responsibly acknowledge that result and step aside,” Rice said.

The Independent Electoral Commission announced that Ouattara had won the second round of Côte d’Ivoire’s presidential election on November 28 with 54 percent of the vote. Those results were also certified by the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and U.N. special representative Y.J. Choi. However, the Ivorian constitutional court rejected the results and Gbagbo has claimed victory.

The December 7 communiqué from Côte d’Ivoire’s neighbors in ECOWAS suspended Abidjan “from all

ECOWAS decisionmaking bodies until further notice” and “condemned in strong terms the attempt to go against the will of the Ivorian people.”

ECOWAS recognized Ouattara as Côte d’Ivoire’s president-elect, citing a desire “to protect the legitimacy of the electoral process,” while calling on Gbagbo to “abide by the results of the second round of presidential elections as certified by UNOCI, and to yield power without delay, in the best interest of the Ivorian people.”

The ECOWAS communiqué also expressed concern that the situation in Côte d’Ivoire poses threats to the success of the peace process that followed the 2002–2007 civil war between the northern and southern parts of the country.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the United States is “obviously concerned that if the current government makes the wrong choices, there could very well be the risk of violence.”

He said U.S. diplomats in Abidjan, led by Ambassador Phillip Carter, are “trying to do everything possible to keep the situation calm while leaders work through this process.”

In a December 3 statement, President Obama said Côte d’Ivoire “is now at a crossroads,” and urged incumbent President Gbagbo and all other Ivorians to respect the election results. “The international community will hold those who act to thwart the democratic process and the will of the electorate accountable for their actions,” Obama said.

Obama also sent Gbagbo a letter December 3 after his attempts to reach the Ivorian leader by phone were unsuccessful.

A senior Obama administration official who asked not to be identified told AllAfrica.com December 8 that in the letter Obama “laid out a clear choice” to Gbagbo.

“Respect the results of the election and you will have a role to play,” as well as the U.S. president’s “personal support ... in playing that role,” the official said. “Ignore and override the results of the election and you will be isolated and held accountable, and you will not have the support of the United States.”

Obama also reminded Gbagbo that the Ivorian leader had himself been an opposition figure who called for free and fair democratic elections, the official said. Gbagbo’s 2000 election victory was annulled by military ruler Robert Guei, but he became president after a popular uprising swept Guei from power.

The official said Obama invited Gbagbo to the White

House "for discussions ... on ways to advance democracy and development in Côte d'Ivoire and West Africa" if Gbagbo agreed to step aside.

A second U.S. official told AllAfrica.com that the United States is consulting with the U.N. Security Council on possible measures designed to pressure Gbagbo to relinquish power.

"Certainly we have made clear, and others have made clear, that those who subvert the democratic process will be held accountable," the official said. "That points to looking at targeted measures that seek to isolate individuals responsible for an undemocratic seizure of power and also, critically, for any kind of instigation of violence."

(Preceding items distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://america.gov>)